

Leesburg Standing Residential Traffic Committee Minutes of Monday, March 31, 2003

The Leesburg Standing Residential Traffic Committee met on Monday, March 31, 2003, in the Lower Level Conference Room of the Municipal Government Center, 25 West Market Street, Leesburg, Virginia. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present

Elizabeth Whiting, Chair

Ric Knight, Vice Chair

Planning Commissioner Lyle Werner

Gabriella Kelemen

Peg Coleman

Town Staff Present

Mike Bomgardner

Calvin Grow

Sgt. Mark McCartney

VRTA Representatives

Kathy Finniff

Mike Socha

1. On motion by Calvin Grow, seconded by Lyle Werner, the minutes of the March 3, 2003 meeting were unanimously approved as presented.
2. *Public Comment:* None.
3. *Leesburg Main Street Committee Presentation:* Karen Jones, Chairman of the Leesburg Economic Development Commission, addressed the Committee regarding initiatives that she believed overlapped Committee undertakings. For example, she outlined the recommendations of the Downtown Business Strategy developed as a 10-year plan by Arnett Muldrow, including drawing the W&OD users to the Historic Downtown and maintaining downtown “walkability” as important economic assets. Karen Jones indicated that Leesburg’s Main Street Committee had been identified as the lead committee for shepherding these recommendations into being. She also noted the Way-finding signage project in which the Committee has been active and the Trails initiative in which Peg Coleman is active. Karen Jones emphasized that she didn’t want the Main Street initiatives to result in a new bureaucracy; instead, she hoped to see leadership of particular projects assumed by commissions and committees already active in those areas. The Committee agreed that it should have a formal relationship with these Main Street projects; Peg Coleman has agreed to work as the Committee liaison and Liz Whiting indicated that she also hoped to stay actively involved.

The Committee noted some of their undertakings they believed would be of interest to Karen Jones: First, Liz Whiting noted that the original Residential Traffic Task Force Report includes not just the traffic calming and pilot project recommendations that the Town Council created the Committee to shepherd, but also addresses the value to residential traffic calming of such measures as gateway signage to mark transition between residential and non-residential neighborhoods, landscaped amenities, connecting trail networks to the Downtown Historic District, and accommodating non-motorized traffic at

destinations throughout the town. The Committee cited their role in the Exeter Hills improvement recommendations, including the Council's addition of mini-traffic circles at Catoctin Circle's intersections with North Street, N.E. and Marshall Street, N.E. as part of the upcoming construction project. Liz Whiting also noted that the upcoming budget request includes funds for a bicyclist/pedestrian safety campaign.

4. *Virginia Regional Transportation Authority:* Liz Whiting noted that several questions and observations related to the fence construction intended to discourage pedestrian crossings of the Route 15 By-Pass prompted the request for updates on Saf-T-Ride from VRTA. Although Kathy Finniff and Mike Socha were not prepared to address some of the questions that arose, they noted that use of Saf-T-Ride reached 1100 and 1000 in November and December 2002, respectively, and that even with February's severe weather, nearly 800 rides were logged. Kathy Finniff and Mike Socha said that they would see if bicycle racks could be added to the Saf-T-Ride bus and endorsed repeating last year's letters to the PTA/PTOs for elementary and middle schools urging that parents be notified about the availability of the service. Mike Socha also noted that a sixteen passenger bus is now devoted to Saf-T-Ride and that it is prominently marked as a free service. Lyle Werner endorsed the suggestion that flyers promoting the service could be developed for dropping into shopping bags at retail outlets. Kathy Finniff and Mike Socha agreed to regularly update figures regarding Saf-T-Ride usage, including boarding and exit points, as VRTA and the Committee try to find the optimal balance between designing a high-demand route and devising a quick circuit so as to encourage potential by-pass dashers to wait for the next bus. Ric Knight's inquiry about the evening and Saturday on-request service prompted confirmation that the Committee's recommendation that the town fund the Saturday service has resulted in its ongoing availability within the town and for trips to the hospital.
5. *Southwest Quadrant "pinchpoint" update:* Mike Bomgardner reported that using the VDOT standards for "chokers," he had identified three potential locations for "pinchpoints" to support the Committee budget recommendation. Mike Bomgardner and Calvin Grow reported that Tom Mason had recommended against identifying specific locations at this stage, since property owners at the identified sites are likely to be surprised and unhappy at being identified in a process they are not invited to participate in. Liz Whiting pointed out that since the budget item was to develop a proposal for a system of pinchpoints to complement the pedestrian crossings, it seemed premature to have identified their location in any event. The Committee also felt that the Arlington County textured asphalt offered a "choker" option preferable to VDOT's in several respects: they likely are cheaper, don't necessitate loss of parking spaces, and seem more aesthetically compatible with the image the town and its citizens have of their neighborhoods.

6. *FY '04 Budget Request status:* Calvin Grow noted that the Committee request is 24th out of 25 on the projects recommended by the Town Manager's budget. (This is a step up from last year.) However, the request would be funded only if the cigarette tax and real property tax rates were increased as recommended in the budget. Liz Whiting indicated that she planned to appear at the April 8th public hearing to support the request. Peg Coleman said that she hoped to appear with southwest quadrant residents during the public comment period and would stay on during the public hearing. The Committee agreed that in addition to supporting the particular projects requested, and relating their consistency with other goals and initiatives endorsed by the Town Council, that Liz Whiting should also outline all the projects that the Committee has endorsed that have been or are being accomplished.
7. *Bicyclist/Pedestrian Safety Campaign:* Mark McCartney prepared a handout on state and local laws setting out the "rules of the road" for motor vehicle operators, bicyclists and pedestrians. Liz Whiting indicated that she had been doing some research on those topics and discovered that they were more complicated than she expected. For example, she noted that Virginia law allows bicyclists to use sidewalks, but permits localities to forbid such use, which the Town of Leesburg has done. (However, the enabling legislation also requires posting the prohibition which may or may not be met by a blanket prohibition throughout the town.) Liz Whiting suggested that a first step in the campaign should be to consult the Town Council and confirm that the present ordinances reflect where the town wants to be on this issue. Mark McCartney noted that enforcement of the "no sidewalk" standard does not arise unless the police are faced with an aggressive situation. The Committee felt, however, that any educational campaign handout would have to accurately reflect the law and that it was appropriate to consult the town Council at the start. Gabe Kelemen noted that serious cyclists would never use sidewalks and, in situations where main routes into town are not cyclist-friendly, they look for the established back routes. While perhaps better grouped with Karen Jones' downtown development campaign, the Committee felt that developing the "backdoor" route to downtown for bicyclists was a good idea.
8. *Committee member concerns/New Business:* Calvin Grow noted that one matter was referred to the Committee by the Town Council at their last meeting: all-way stop signs at the intersection of Wirt Street, N.W. and North Street, N.W. Liz Whiting asked that the matter be scheduled for the May meeting with any appropriate staff reports and recommendations to be prepared in the interim.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m. The next meeting is Monday, May 5, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. Staff is to contact Liz Whiting if anything arises needing Committee consideration in the interim.